



FIA Icon

Family Independence Agency—Lansing, Mich. • May-June 2001

Child day care locator now available online

Electronic payment for FIA child care providers now available

LANSING—At an April 17 news conference, the FIA and other state agencies announced new options for parents and child care providers.

Officials said Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services and e-Michigan combined forces to create a new child care locator service. Meanwhile, the FIA worked with Michigan Department of Management and

Budget to give FIA child care providers the option of receiving their payments from the state via electronic funds transfer – otherwise known as “EFT” or “Direct Deposit.”

Parents seeking licensed child care providers and approved FIA child care vendors can access these new options by going to the FIA website www.mfia.state.mi.us and clicking on the “Today’s Child”

icon. At the site parents can search for child care providers, find guidelines for finding quality child care and access other child care related information.

After opening the site through the “Today’s Child” icon, parents searching online for a child care spot can click on “Licensed Child Care In Your Neighborhood” to

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Isabella, Clare and Houghton counties hit “zero”

Counties are 85th, 86th and 87th to achieve goal

When the Houghton County Project Zero program reached “zero” April 24, it became the 87th Project

Zero site to achieve that distinction, following the Isabella County program hitting the mark April 3 and

Clare County reaching zero on March 23. It was the first time each county reached “zero”.

With those counties, 87 of 103 Project Zero sites have reached “zero” at least once since September 1997 when Ottawa County was the first Project Zero site to reach that benchmark.

“Zero” is a point in time when all nondeferred Family Independence Program (FIP) cases in any county are working and reporting earnings.

“FIA and Work First staff were committed to the goal, but the real credit for this accomplishment goes to our customers who, in spite of setbacks, continued to seek and obtain employment,” said Vicki Clark, acting director of Isabella County FIA.

“We are continuing to encourage our working families to increase their hours of employment and, at the same time, we are working with the community to improve

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Submitting stories for FIA Icon

FIA Icon seeks to represent the universe of activity in the Family Independence Agency. Stories about FIA people, programs, events and policies are always welcome. Stories should be preapproved by local authorities and submitted through an appropriate editorial board member or the editor. It is best to submit stories via email in an unformatted MS Word file.

Deadlines

Generally, the deadline to submit stories for the next issue of FIA Icon is the last day of the month. FIA Icon may not be published every month but editorial board members know when deadlines are near. You can reach editorial board members or the editor by email if you have questions about a deadline.

Story duration

There is no page length or word count limit on stories, although all submissions will be edited for style, content and readability. Most stories and their elements can run on two facing pages or less and say everything necessary. Anything longer requires readers to turn to another page to read more. Most readers hate jumps. About one page of single-spaced typed copy is equivalent to one page of copy in FIA Icon.

Run dates

Because of the long lead and publication time requirements, FIA Icon is not the ideal vehicle for time-limited stories. It is a better vehicle for features that use text, photos and art explaining a program, event, person or policy feature. Please contact the editor or an editorial board member before submitting a time-limited story to ensure it is published in time.

Reader interests

FIA employees reported in a recent survey they read the newsletter, want to know about FIA programs, and are very interested in other FIA employees. Stories that reflect and support the important work of our employees are strongly encouraged.

Photography and art

Color, photography and art enhance readership in stories. FIA Icon is restricted to two-color printing. Any picture that is clear can be used. If a picture contains a customer of FIA services, a signed consent form must accompany it allowing the FIA to use the photo and names of people in the picture. Waivers are not required for pictures of employees or non-customers, although rules of courtesy apply. You can obtain a consent form from the FIA Office of Communications by calling (517) 373-7394.

Digital photos transmitted via email are easiest to use but hardcopy photos work fine. The size of the photo is not important and it does not matter if it is color or black and white. FIA Icon will return any photo upon request. FIA Icon can import any graph created in Excel and can reproduce most graphic elements as long as they are not copyrighted. Please attach art and graphic files in separate documents and do not format them into stories.

Photos of juveniles

FIA Icon cannot use the names and photos of juveniles in FIA facilities that are under age 18 even with their parents' permission. FIA Icon has previously used photos from juvenile facilities that include residents, but the pictures are taken from far away or behind the person, so no identification can be made. This is an acceptable practice.

■ Need more information? Email the editor at vandesandel@state.mi.us



FIA Icon

*a publication of Michigan's
Family Independence Agency*

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency



Welcoming the electronic age to FIA

The Family Independence Agency was pleased and proud to participate in the April 17 news conference discussed in the front page story of this newsletter. The FIA and our partners in e-Michigan, Department of Management and Budget & Department of Consumer and Industry Services worked together successfully to make child care more accessible and safer for parents.

Through a linkage between the FIA, e-Michigan and CIS websites, the FIA is able to help parents learn where child care is available in their neighborhood, whether those providers have had licensing complaints, and lots more information on child care. And they can start doing all this simply by clicking on the new "Today's Child" icon on the FIA website.

While I agree this is not an earth-shattering development, keep in mind that child care for working parents—whether or not they receive any other services from our agency—is one of the most important

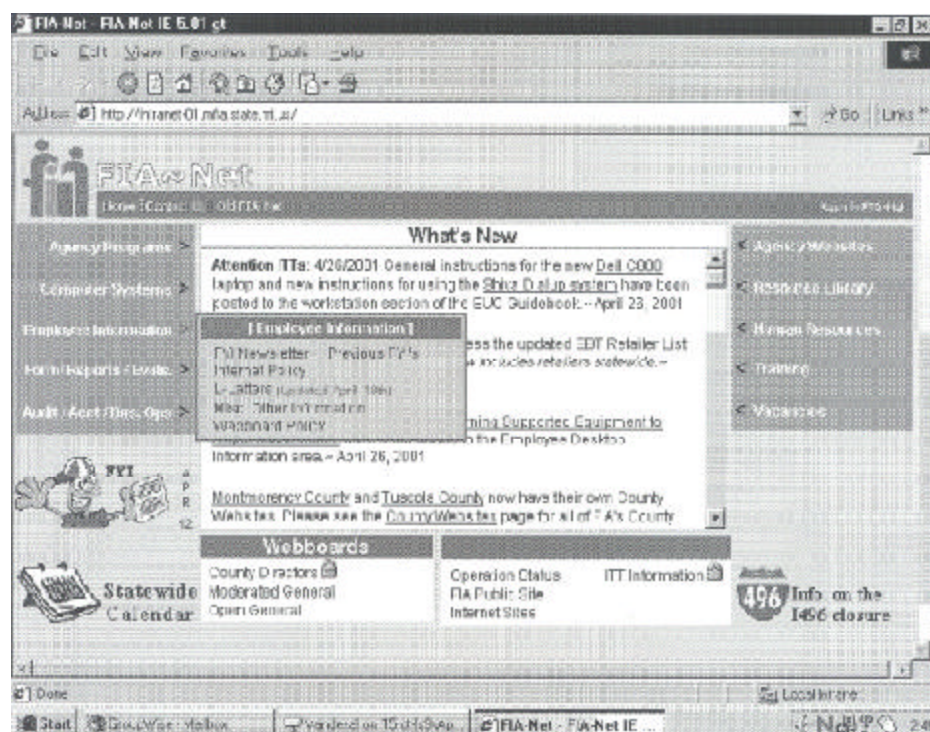
considerations they make about their work life. Our agency's partnership with the other three state agencies will make this part of a parent's life a little bit easier. It is the beginning of a process to make more and more services available online.

The new link on the FIA website can also make life a little easier for persons who are considering providing child care services to FIA customers, and for our current providers who can enroll in a new electronic payment program from the website.

In the FIA, we are working on similar web technology improvements

for FIA employees. A recent survey of FIA employees conducted by the FIA Survey Center for the Office of Communications indicated that as many as 30 percent of employees log onto the FIA-Net once a month or less often. If you are one of those persons, I encourage you to view the upgraded FIA-Net and try some of the new features. As you can see from the illustration on this page, the new FIA-Net is more functionally organized and offers more features than previously.

It is one small step your co-workers in the Family Independence Agency have taken to make your work life more productive and rewarding. I hope you share my enthusiasm for development of "My FIA-Net", which we will hear about in coming months in this newsletter. Until then, thanks for your help making the FIA a better place for our customers and co-workers.



Intercepted letters

To: Nancy DeWees, Manager, FIA Zone 1
Subj: Something pretty neat
Date: March 29, 2001

I wanted to share a story that made me proud to be with Alger-Schoolcraft FIA. On March 23 we got a CPS call from our local Community Mental Health agency. It said due to a father's "stubbornness", the Department of Community Health planned to pull the 22 hours of respite care out of the home of a 16-year-old with multiple physical and developmental problems. The father recently had surgery on his shoulder and could not lift his daughter for care and toileting needs. Father reported that the only way he could sleep was in a recliner chair and moved to his parents' home, as he didn't have one.

CMH and DCH did not want to leave the girl alone for the "off hours" and wanted father to sign guardianship for the girl or consider a three-month foster care placement. Father claimed he had no one able or willing to take on that responsibility so there was an impasse. CMH wanted our CPS worker to file the neglect petition and have our judge order dad to sign the forms or place the girl in foster care.

That action was not in the child's best interest and we were able to negotiate a seven-day delay in the removal of DCH services while (Schoolcraft County CPS specialist) Dennis Ylinen intervened. Dad agreed to return to his home on Friday night and stay there until Monday morning, when he could meet with Dennis. Within 1½ hours major progress was made when paternal grandparents agreed to give one of their three recliners to father for use during his recovery.

Dennis and Steve Latterman, our child welfare specialist, put the recliner in Dennis' truck and moved it across town to father's home. Dad is comfortable, the child is still in her home, and relations between dad and CMH are on the slow road to repair.

Sometimes we are so busy building bureaucracies that reason and logic go out the window. The simple and straightforward answer to the question, "what will it take to make this work?" was moving the recliner. Pretty neat.

Robyn Loviska, Director

Alger-Schoolcraft Family Independence Agency



To: FIA director Douglas Howard
Subj: FIA Icon
Date: March 28, 2001

Being the liaison of county Board of Commissioners and local FIA Board, I attend their monthly meetings. Along with the agenda at these meetings we usually have a copy of the latest issue of FIA Icon. Usually, this type of newsletter has very little interest or worth. However, I want to compliment you and your staff on the content and timeliness of the articles in your publications. The last issue was particularly good covering such things as the benefit (EBT Bridge) card, the increase in adoptions in Michigan, and the stories about the Achievers are most interesting.

Frank Smith, Chairman

Dickinson County Board of Commissioners
Iron Mountain



To: Sue Orr, Arenac County Family Independence Agency
Subj: Irene Bueche
Date: Feb. 19, 2001

This note is to let you know what a fantastic job Irene Bueche does with the youth plus her working relationship with our staff at Huron House and Russell House. She is one of the finest children's workers at FIA that we have encountered. Just wanted you to know how much we appreciate her love and concern for the youth. She always has all the paperwork here on a timely basis for us at placement. She needs a big raise!

Ruth A. Textor, Division Manager

Boysville of Michigan

there's another [Intercepted letter](#) on page 5

Child day care locator now available online

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locate licensed child care centers, group homes and registered family homes by name, address or zip code search. Parents can review information such as hours of operation, age of children each center will care for, and licensed capacities.

"This is an example where agencies with separate jurisdictions worked together in the best interests of Michigan citizens," said Stephanie Comai, director of e-Michigan, the state agency responsible for leading statewide e-commerce initiatives. Working through e-Michigan, Consumer and Industry Services developed the child care locator function.

At the site parents can access other child day care information including general information on help with child care expenses through the FIA. FIA-eligible parents can download an application for FIA-funded child care services and links to information about selecting a child care provider.

The FIA has started inviting its providers to enroll to receive payments electronically. The FIA will begin making electronic payments using an electronic system administered by Michigan Administrative Information Network (MAIN).

The system offers the option of electronic funds transfer of payments to child care providers who provide care for FIA-eligible children only. The FIA expects to offer its providers the option to submit invoices electronically in the near future.

The electronic payments are restricted to Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services licensed providers who care for children eligible for child day care payments.

Direct deposit for child care payments

FIA providers can register to have payments made electronically. Direct deposit of child care payments is now available for all child care providers who care for FIA-funded children, except day care aides.

"By providing this service, the state of Michigan is addressing an expressed need of many child care providers for a convenient form of payment from FIA," said Paul Nelson, director of the FIA Child Development and Care Division. "We think they will be pleased with the efficiency direct deposit will afford."

Internet registration is available to providers who wish to arrange for the direct deposit of their payments. Access can be gained from the Michigan Child Development and Care website at <http://www.mfia.state.mi.us> and clicking on the "Today's Child" icon.

Detailed instructions are available at this website to assist providers in the registration process. If providers have difficulty signing up for direct deposit, they may call the following toll-free number for technical assistance at Department of Management and Budget: 1-888-734-9749.

The state of Michigan implemented direct deposits to child care providers via electronic funds transfer in April 2001. Providers can expect direct deposit of their FIA child care payment two to three weeks after they complete registration and Michigan Department of Management and Budget receives the "State of Michigan Electronic Funds Transfer (Direct Deposit) Authorization for Vendor Payments".

more Intercepted letters

To: Douglas E. Howard
Subj: Customer service
Date: Nov. 2, 2000

(From Linda Sue Randall) I'm a secretary at Ogemaw County FIA and one of our family independence managers sent this email to staff this morning. I wanted to share this with you because you're the boss and don't always get good stuff. We have a great group in Ogemaw County:

"I was called to the front desk late yesterday at the request of a client, expecting a problem of some sort (which is usual when the supervisor is requested). Instead, Chanee Louchart wanted to express her thanks for the wonderful treatment she received in our office.

"She specifically mentioned Tim Rowley, Eileen Howell, Steve Talarico, Les Crandell, Diane Clark and Sue Russell for being exceptionally kind and helpful. It was great to be on the receiving end of very sincere compliments for the staff. Just wanted to share this and express my thanks, as well."

Joey Marshall, Family Independence Manager
Ogemaw County Family Independence Agency, West Branch

Note: Time acquiring customer approval delayed publication of this letter.

Battle Creek's Melissa Henry is 87th FIA Achiever

Single mom with seven kids defeats substance abuse & unemployment to build better life

By Kari Katalenich, Administrative Analyst and Jane King, Project Zero Coordinator

Calhoun County Family Independence Agency, Battle Creek

Telephone (616) 966-1273 (Katalenich) and 966-1399 (King)

BATTLE CREEK—On Feb. 16 the Family Independence Agency's 87th Achiever of the Month ceremony was held in Calhoun County to recognize Melissa Henry.

Many friends, family members and FIA staff members were in attendance to congratulate Melissa on her many achievements. Calhoun County FIA director Katherine Haines welcomed everyone and introduced special guests that included Michigan FIA director Douglas Howard, FIA Outstate Operations director Jim Nye, FIA Zone 3 manager Kathie McDonald and FIA Board chair Dr. James Maurer.

Also attending were state Rep. Mark Schauer of Battle Creek, Rep. Jerry Vander Roest of Galesburg, and Robert Lyman, a representative from the office of state Sen. John Schwarz of Battle Creek.

Speaking to the standing room only crowd, Howard recognized the efforts of FIA staff and community partners, summarized the purpose of the award, and reviewed the many changes that have occurred in the FIA program over the past 10 years.

Welfare reform changes

"Michigan's welfare system has undergone some very significant changes since we began implementing *To Strengthen Michigan Families* in October 1992," said Howard. "The major differences being the family supports that are now available. These changes have made a real and positive difference in the lives of Michigan's public assistance recipients and their families."

Howard welcomed Melissa's



Melissa Henry

Joy, age 6; and five-year-old Jasmine. He also introduced Sheila Bradford, Melissa's mother. Also attending were members of Melissa's extended family and her friends.

"I am very pleased to recognize Melissa Henry, who has faced tremendous odds and has exhibited a very unique ability to meet life's challenges while making progress toward economic independence," Howard said. He commended Melissa's on her motto for life, which is, "I'm in it to win it!"

Howard mentioned the value and importance of Melissa's family support system and the support of the many community partners including Work First and Habitat for Humanity. While discussing the wealth of assistance Melissa received from her family and the community, he said, "Networking is key."

An old story reviewed

Melissa first received Aid for Dependent Children services in 1973. Over the years she struggled with single motherhood and drug and alcohol addiction. Melissa was frequently homeless and her children were removed from her custody. She entered treatment programs on two

family, including her seven children—14-year-old twins Sierra and Tierra; Marvin, age 10; Iesha, age 9; seven-year-old Jenequa;

occasions. She finally realized that she had one last chance to save her own life and reclaim her children.

"Melissa was not where she wanted to be in her life and she was following a lifestyle that she did not want her children to emulate," said Howard. "Finding the courage to break free was difficult but she knew she needed to do so."

Melissa spent 14 months in a drug treatment program called Odyssey House and was reunited with her children following the end of her treatment. Soon she was referred to the Work First program where she quickly became employed at Little Caesar's Pizza. Although she was happy to have the job, she desired employment that offered more hours and the opportunity to increase her earnings.

What hasn't she done?

Shortly thereafter, Melissa's mother was having dinner at a Chicken Coop restaurant and overheard the staff complaining about long hours due to being understaffed. Mrs. Bradford requested an application, which she gave to Melissa. Cathy Caraway, manager of the Chicken Coop, interviewed Melissa.

When Cathy said she was looking for someone who could delegate responsibility and handle crises, Melissa replied that she could handle it—after all, she had seven children. With that, Cathy hired her on the spot. She has been working at the Chicken Coop since 1997 and is now the evening manager.

In addition to helping Melissa find a job, Mrs. Bradford was instrumental in helping Melissa connect

with Habitat for Humanity.

Art Pearce, executive director of Habitat for Humanity, praised Melissa and her children for their determined efforts in helping build their home. Melissa is now living in the Habitat home and paying rent toward ownership.

Proof of the human spirit

Patty Riddle, Calhoun County FIA family independence specialist who nominated Melissa for the Achiever of the Month award, acknowledged Melissa's efforts in overcoming tremendous odds to improve life for her family.

"You are the proof that the human spirit can overcome all barriers; you *are* in it to win it!" Riddle said.

Calhoun County FIA foster care worker Larry Williams said he met Melissa when she was pretty close to reaching bottom. But even in the worst of times, Williams said she displayed qualities of determination and pride that brought her to where she is today.

"Her love for her children and the support of her mother helped her beat the odds," said Larry, who complimented Melissa on a job well done.

Mrs. Bradford spoke of her love for Melissa and pride in her accomplishments saying, "She's

always been my daughter; today she's my best friend." Mrs. Bradford also acknowledged the contributions of the community, stating that everyone in attendance was intricately woven into Melissa's life.

Melissa credits her mother with helping her achieve the happiness and success she enjoys today. When asked how her mother had helped her Melissa replied:

"What *hasn't* she done? She listens, helps with the children, and offers emotional support. She is

herself. She was surprised at the things she could achieve—things we all take for granted. Mrs. Bradford summed up her thoughts saying, "As long as you can see up, you can get up."

One person can represent everyone's accomplishments

State Reps. Schauer and Vander Roest and Lyman jointly presented Melissa with a Certificate of Achievement. "I want to tell you how proud we are of you and thank

you for letting us share in your accomplishments," said Vander Roest.

Melissa's FIA specialist, Patty Riddle, presented her with a gift certificate from the County FIA Board and a camera purchased with funds provided by FIA staff who had previously worked with Melissa. Howard then presented Melissa with her Achiever Award and a gift certificate to Kmart.

Melissa thanked everyone for the words of praise and the good wishes. She acknowledged those who had helped her along the

way—her employer, Habitat for Humanity, her family, and FIA staff members, including FIS Patty Riddle, Debbie Smith and Liz Deiter.

"I want to thank everyone for being here today and foremost I want to thank God, because without Him we couldn't have done this today," she said.



Melissa Henry with her seven children (clockwise from left): Sierra and Tierra, age 14; Melissa; Iesha, age 9; Jenequa, age 7; Joy, age 6; Jasmine, age 5, and Melissa's sister. Son Marvin, age 10, is in the center.

always there for everything. Sometimes she tells me things I don't want to hear but I know what she is telling me is the truth. She is my best friend."

Mrs. Bradford spoke of the transformation in Melissa's life when she began making positive steps toward improving her life. She said Melissa realized she could be a productive citizen and took pride in



Shiawassee-Clinton counties' "New Beginnings"

**Dual county FIA sponsors day to rejoice customer success and independence
More than 100 customers, staff and guests participate in special events**

By Kathy Wisler, Family Independence Manager
Shiawassee County Family Independence Agency, Owosso
Telephone (517) 725-3250

OWOSSO, Mich.—On Jan. 31, the Shiawassee and Clinton County Family Independence Agency hosted "New Beginnings", a day to show appreciation to our customers. At a special event, 112 staff and customers gathered at the Comstock Inn in Owosso, Shiawassee County's largest city, to hear presentations, visit displays, participate in workshops and celebrate success.

Attendees included Shiawassee and Clinton County FIA customers, local office staff from both counties, FIA zone and administrative staff and those from other FIA county offices, area agencies and community partners.

The customer appreciation event culminated months of planning by this group of people: Janet Shuster, Project Zero coordinator for Shiawassee and Clinton County FIA; Paula Clark, director of Shiawassee and Clinton County FIA; and staff from both county offices. The celebration focused on three major themes:

- A special day to celebrate people's success and strides toward independence.
- A special day to explore new resources.
- A special day to celebrate new opportunities.

Following registration and a continental breakfast, Clark welcomed and congratulated our guests on their many successes. In addition, she expressed gratitude to the Family Independence Agency and Clinton-Shiawassee County Management Team and staff, Work First providers,



Shiawassee-Clinton County Family Independence Agency director Paul Clark addresses the meeting (left). Seated are (from left) Michael Zelley, chairperson of the Genesee-Shiawassee Work Force Development Board; Jim Nye, FIA Outstate Operations director; Lester Brown of L. L. Brown International, Inc.; Janet Shuster, Project Zero coordinator for Shiawassee-Clinton FIA; and Clark.



community partners and especially our "customer guests" for making this event a reality.

Participants then heard welcoming comments from Jim Nye, FIA director of Outstate Operations, who was representing state FIA director Douglas Howard. Other officials delivering comments at the special event included Janet Burch, FIA Zone 4 manager, Michael Zelley, chairperson of the Genesee-Shiawassee Work Force Development Board, and Janet Shuster.

They collectively inspired participants with their messages of congratulations on their success while

noting the importance of work, use of supportive services in getting and keeping a job, and the need for customers to dream and try new things.

Conference attendees had the opportunity to experience a variety of activities consistent with their needs and interests along with participating in workshop sessions that were conducted throughout the day. Workshop sessions conducted during the event included:

- "Dressing for Success for Less", presented by Nancy Patterson and Shyron Samuels of Wayne County FIA.

(more next page)

- “Quick Economic and Healthy Meals”, by the MSU Extension Office.
- “Making Choices – Financial Management”, by Citizens Bank.
- “Challenges to Independence”, by Tim Steinbrink of the Disability Network for Genesee-Shiawassee County.
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority session by Howard Miles.
- “The Act of Loving Your Life” by Sheri Wolfert of Bright Side Presentations.
- “Maximizing Your Life” by L. L. Brown and Associates.

The luncheon keynote speaker, Arthur “Yogi” Ward of Yogi’s Top Flight Limo Service, Inc., gave a presentation on “Overcoming Obstacles and Fears: Whatever It Takes”. In addition, attendees could have health screenings, which were offered by Memorial HealthCare Center of Owosso. Customers and others attending the event had the opportunity to visit display tables staffed by the following community organizations: Kar-Cello’s of St. Johns (Clinton County’s largest city); Michigan Department of Civil Rights; Capital Area Community Services – Clinton and Shiawassee Counties; Michigan Department of Career Development; Peckham Inc., a rehabilitation and employment agency; Michigan Office for Young Children; Relief Against Violent Encounters (R.A.V.E.), a local domestic violence shelter agency; Baker College, Owosso; Human Investment Corporation; Career Alliance and Memorial HealthCare Center.

The displays reflected the changing needs of our customers as they become employed and active in their communities. At the end of the day, many customers received door

prizes that included certificates for groceries, makeovers, manicures, haircuts and body massages.

The “New Beginnings” conference is expected to become an annual event and an integral part of our counties’ Project Zero plans. Customers expressed their appreciation for the day’s event and offered suggestions for the next celebration.

In the words of one customer, “I didn’t really know quite what to expect and thought this just might be boring. But it wasn’t. It was really rewarding.”

We agree and are committed to making “New Beginnings” a substantial event that helps our customers move toward success and independence.

Bellinger is Lapeer County FIA director

FIA director Howard announced March 26 the appointment of Pat Bellinger as director of the Lapeer County FIA.

“Pat performed admirably as the agency’s acting director for the past year,” Howard said. “She brings experience and outstanding community involvement.”

Bellinger has been an FIA employee 24 years. She holds a bachelor’s degree from U-M Flint, is married and the mother of four children, and lives in Columbiaville.

Three counties hit zero

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supports, including increased public transportation routes extending to our rural population.”

Project Zero began with six pilot sites in July 1996 and is operational all 83 counties. Project Zero measures progress with nondeferred or “target” cases—those open 60 days, required to participate in the Work First program and expected to have earnings.

“Five years ago, few people would have expected a county like Clare—with a very high poverty rate—to have met the Project Zero goal,” said Clare County FIA director Stephen Smith.

“The credit goes to our customers, our hard-working staff and the employers in the community. We are very proud of everyone’s efforts.”

Project Zero is a cooperative effort involving state and local agencies, businesses and service providers. State level partners include the FIA, the departments of Career Development, Transportation and Community Health and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Local projects access state resources through formal agreements between state and local agencies.

Houghton County Family Independence Agency director James Aebli praised his county partnership for their accomplishment.

“This represents a united effort by our Project Zero coordinator, family independence managers, family independence specialist, the Michigan Works! Agency, business community and our customers in Houghton County. It also means effective family-focused change can and has occurred through welfare reform.”

■ For more information on Project Zero, see the FIA website: www.mfia.state.mi.us

Michigan hosts prototype orientation meetings

Disability Determination Service hosts state and national visitors

By Terry Wulbrecht, Director

Interagency Coordination Program

Michigan Disability Determination Service, Detroit

Telephone (313) 256-1909

LANSING—In the spirit of national collaboration, the Michigan Disability Determination Service (DDS) hosted meetings for DDS partners from other states earlier this year.

At two-day meetings in February and March, Michigan DDS hosted visitors from the Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota and Wisconsin DDS. Also attending were Phil Landis from the Social Security Administration and Mark Moskop and JoEllen Luscombe from the Chicago regional office.

The visits provided an overview of the Michigan DDS prototype transition, an opportunity to share its changed management plan and discuss ongoing refinements and



Michigan Disability Determination Service hosted visitors from four states and the Social Security Administration in February and March.

Kalamazoo and Traverse City.

Each two-day conference included formal and informal discussion and presentations relating to process, communication, training, workload management, quality, classification issues and public relations.

The Michigan DDS provided

Terry Quarles, prototype coordinator for Kentucky DDS, said, "The presentations were well-done and the handbook appears to contain a lot of good basic information."

Stephen C. Jones, Kentucky DDS commissioner, said his staff, "Enjoyed the luncheon with cohorts and having time to visit informally with staff and others. Sharing your prototype experiences made it seem very real to my staff and, no doubt, will make our job here much easier!"

Wally Roers, director of Minnesota DDS, expressed thanks for an "outstanding prototype orientation session" and "letting us stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us as we enter prototype."

Michigan DDS director Linda Dorn summed up our role.

"Our experience to date has been challenging," Dorn said. "We believe we have come a long way during this time and continue to work toward refinements and improvements in the process."

"We collectively need to keep our focus on the goals of prototype: specifically, strengthening the initial case, improvements in quality, earlier allowances, efficiency and consistency in the disability claims process."

"Everyone expressed how impressed they were with the effort to make us feel welcome and to inform us about your prototype experiences. The information will be helpful as we plan our rollout."

***-- Graham Duvall, deputy commissioner
Kentucky Disability Determination Service***

adjustments to the new process.

As a "prototype" state, Michigan enhanced services through DDS offices by making case management improvements, enhancing the role of disability examiners and medical consultants, and offering pre-determination conferences for customers.

DDS makes medical decisions on behalf of the Social Security Administration to qualify persons for SSI and SSDI. In Michigan, the DDS is administered through the FIA. Its area offices are in Lansing, Detroit,

handouts and copies of training materials for the states to take back with them and offered tours to interested persons.

The Michigan DDS received many positive comments about the meetings from the participants. Tommy Warren, from the Alabama DDS, another prototype state, noted that while they have much in common with the Michigan DDS and some similar experiences in the prototype transition, they left with some very good ideas that will be helpful to them.

GM commits \$20,000 to youth forum

**Manufacturer provides financial support to disability leadership event for second year
Event will help school students with disabilities become tomorrow's community leaders**

The world's largest automotive corporation reaffirmed their commitment to the future by supporting leadership training for youth with disabilities.

Lorna Utley, director of diversity initiatives and philanthropy at General Motors and president of the GM Foundation, said GM has contributed

\$20,000 to the second Michigan Youth Leadership Forum. The forum, to be held in June, is a leadership program for selected Michigan high school students with disabilities.

"General Motors is pleased to join its employees in supporting programs and organizations, such as the **Michigan Youth Leadership Forum**, that make a meaningful contribution to the quality of life in society," said Utley April 4. "Through the forum, students with disabilities can promote their abilities as future leaders."

The second Michigan Youth Leadership Forum will be held June 24-28 at Michigan State University. It is a unique leadership program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities and is organized by a unit of Michigan state government.

The Michigan Youth Leadership Forum is coordinated by the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns in partnership with other public and private agencies. The commission is administered through the Family Independence Agency.

"The youth leadership forum

is a unique venture in state government to create future community leaders," said Governor John Engler. "Here is an example where partnership between state government and the private sector acts as investment

in our state's future."

The forum program is based on mentor relationships and developing leadership by example. Throughout the five-day forum, successful adults with disabilities serve as mentors in their roles as program presenters and small group leaders. They assist youth attending the forum to develop personal leadership plans and help them realize their ability, right, and obligation to contribute to society.

Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns is comprised of 21 members appointed by the governor and staff persons based in Lansing. It acts as a resource and advocacy agency for Michigan citizens with disabilities.

"The Michigan Youth Leadership Forum is a successful program structured to prepare Michigan youth with disabilities for the challenges they will face as they become leaders in their communities," said Douglas E. Howard, director of the Family Independence Agency. "General Motors has long supported similar programs that help

Michigan citizens with disabilities."

About 30 students will be selected to attend the training forum in June. They will be selected through a competitive application process and will attend at no cost to their families.

"With GM as the primary corporate sponsor, a successful first Michigan Youth

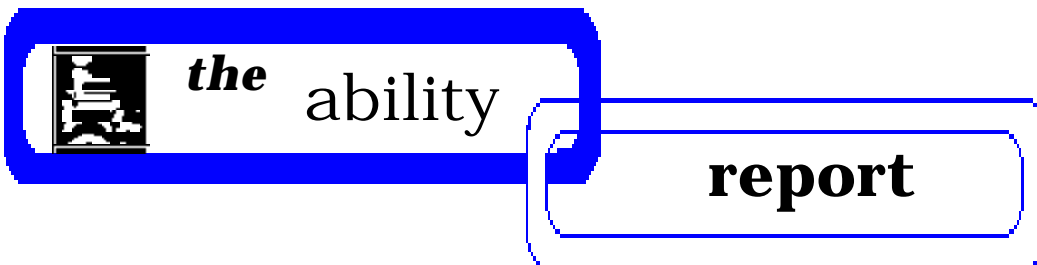
Leadership Forum was held in June 2000," said Lydia Graber, chairperson of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns.

"That forum helped student delegates achieve successful outcomes in their communities including service on local boards, doing disability awareness presentations in schools, and returning as program assistants for this year's forum."

In addition to the General Motors contribution, state and local agencies and other private businesses have also made financial contributions to the June forum.

"Our commission is pleased to continue its ongoing partnership with General Motors," said Gerry Mutty, staff director of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns. "This significant support affirms our shared belief in the unlimited potential of Michigan youth with disabilities."

■ **For more information about the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum, contact Gerry Mutty by phone at (517) 334-8000, voice/TTY; email at muttyg@state.mi.us; or Internet at www.mfia.state.mi.us/mcdc/mcdc.htm**



\$578,100 in new child care grants

178 licensed and registered providers receive funds

4 centers and one home provider receive start-up funds

FIA director Douglas Howard announced March 11 the provision of \$578,100 in new grants to child care providers around Michigan.

Grants were awarded only to licensed or registered providers who serve children from low-income families subsidized by the Family Independence Agency.

The grant program, called **Enhanced Quality Improvement Program** or **EQUIP**, is aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of child care in Michigan with focus on increasing infant and toddler care, care for children with special needs, and care during nontraditional working hours.

In addition to 178 EQUIP grants in amounts between \$547 and \$3,500, four licensed child care centers and one in-home provider were awarded \$63,496 in start-up funds. The EQUIP program funds licensed child care providers and creates options for low-income families.

Michigan 4C Association selected the grantees that were funded by the FIA. EQUIP grants were awarded for proposals that address equipment, computers and resources to build child care capacity throughout the state, support childhood development at care centers, and improve staff knowledge and caregiving techniques.

"Special attention is made to develop child care options during afternoon, evening and weekend work shifts and to care for infants and children with special needs" said

FIA director Douglas Howard.

"The success of welfare reform activities revolves around parents' ability to enter and stay in the work force. One of the most important supports a parent can have



is safe, affordable and available child care that meets their needs and schedule."

For the first time, the 4C Association awarded five start-up grants to initiate new child care centers, family homes and group homes in Michigan. These licensed child care centers each received a start-up grant totaling \$15,000:

- The Country Schoolhouse in Escanaba.
- IXL Learning Center in Hamburg.
- Reed City Community Coordinated

Child Care.

■ Children's Outreach in River Rouge.

In addition, the in-home program run by Debra Longstreth in Gladwin received a \$3,496 start-up grant.

EQUIP grants were made to providers in 55 counties. For information on the name, city, grant amount and details for EQUIP grantees in any county, contact the Michigan 4C Association through this toll-free number: (800) 950-4171.

If more than one grantee per county, the number is bracketed: Allegan (2), Antrim, Baraga, Benzie (2), Berrien (6), Bay (4), Branch, Calhoun (3), Cass (2), Charlevoix, Cheboygan (3), Chippewa (5), Clinton (2), Eaton (2), Emmet, Genesee (10), Gogebic, Grand Traverse (6), Gratiot (2), Houghton (3), Huron, Ingham (6), Ionia, Isabella, Jackson (5), Kalamazoo (3), Kalkaska, Kent (8), Lenawee (2), Luce, Macomb (4), Marquette (2), Mason, Mecosta, Midland (2), Montcalm (2), Montmorency (2), Muskegon (6), Newaygo (2), Oakland (3), Oceana, Ogemaw (3), Osceola, Ottawa (9), Presque Isle, Roscommon (2), Saginaw (10), Sanilac (2), Shiawassee (3), St. Clair (2), Tuscola (3), Van Buren (4), Washtenaw (2), Wayne (17) and Wexford.

Working collaboratively with the FIA, Michigan 4C Association regularly awards EQUIP grants to increase licensed child care capacity across the state.

MCB and MSU celebrate success

Commission for the Blind employee earns outstanding alumnus award

By Amy Daniel and Karla Hudson

Michigan Commission for the Blind, Lansing Regional Office

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EAST LANSING—On April 20 Michigan State University's Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities honored Michigan Commission for the Blind staff and students. The annual event highlights outstanding staff, students and alumni who have made excellent contributions in their course studies, teaching instruction and employment endeavors.

Among those receiving awards at the 17th annual event were: Roger Yake, a 28-year employee with Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB); Sonali Nanavati, a junior who receives academic supports from the commission and MSU Resource Center; and Aaron Scheidies, a freshman majoring in kinesiology who also receives academic supports. Darrin Fowler, an MSU graduate who received services from MCB, also attended the event to award scholarships. All four persons have visual impairments.

■ Roger Yake

Roger received the outstanding alumnus award. In 1971 he earned his bachelor's degree in education and in 1973 he completed his master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. Roger recalls that the then MSU Office of Programs for Handicapper Students, now the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, was just beginning to provide support services to students with disabilities in his graduate years.

In July 1973 he obtained employment with MCB. For the past 28 years Roger has contributed to the lives for persons who are blind by coordinating training opportunities at



Karla Hudson and Roger Yake

the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo. Throughout his career Roger has provided gentle encouragement to persons who are blind that their life dreams can continue after blindness.

In 1983 Roger obtained a master's degree from Western Michigan University in rehabilitation teaching. He plays a role in improving technology needs by serving on the MCB technology committee. He also served on the Presidents Committee on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities. Friends and co-workers describe Roger as reliable and steady, always willing to lend a helping hand.

■ Sonali Nanavati

A mathematics major at MSU, Sonali was presented the Student Leadership Award. Sonali is a teaching assistant in the MSU math department and plans to continue studying math in a graduate program. Sonali assisted the Resource Center to implement the electronic text program. The e-text project takes traditional audio textbooks one step further by converting printed materials into electronic documents. The

electronic documents are easily distributed and enable users to independently produce large print, Braille or spoken versions. Sonali participates in the Resource Center's assistive technology peer support group where she demonstrates to other blind students the benefits of using scanning software with speech output.

■ Aaron Scheidies

Aaron was awarded a scholarship from the Fowler Fund to purchase assistive technology that will help him in his course work. Aaron has had a successful first year at MSU, making the Dean's list in both fall and spring semesters. He was selected from the top five percent of MSU's freshman class to participate in the Tower Guard, a student volunteer organization through the Resource Center that provides reading services for students who are blind or learning disabled.

■ Darrin Fowler

A 1994 graduate of MSU, Darrin awarded two scholarships to students with disabilities served by the Resource Center. Darrin exemplifies the success an individual can achieve by receiving assistance from the combined efforts of vocational rehabilitation and a university academic support. Darrin is creating a scholarship fund to help students purchase adaptive equipment. He recognizes the importance of using adaptive technology as a lawyer with the Michigan Attorney General's office. He hopes more people will join him in the scholarship endeavor.

EBT expansion on schedule

Cash assistance benefits to be delivered electronically statewide by July

Expansion of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) to public assistance and food stamp customers around Michigan is proceeding on schedule with relatively few problems. Some of Michigan's most populous counties come on line in April and May.

On May 1, state officials kicked off EBT in Wayne County. Effective April 1, assistance customers in Oakland, Macomb, Livingston, Washtenaw and Monroe counties began accessing benefits using the Michigan Bridge Card to electronically obtain and expend their benefits. With the expansion, FIP and food stamp participants in 47 counties use EBT.

EBT uses the Bridge Card, a product similar to an ATM card, to

expend cash benefits through enrolled retailers and automated teller machines. Food stamp benefits can be redeemed at federally authorized food stamp retailers. Most retailers who previously accepted federal food stamps are enrolled as EBT retailers.

The FIA piloted EBT in Jackson County,

the forerunner to statewide expansion. Beginning the first of every month through July, another group of counties will begin using Bridge cards for cash assistance and food stamps customers until it is statewide.

"Electronic Benefits Transfer provides greater privacy and dignity for public assistance customers," said FIA director Douglas E Howard. "No welfare checks or food stamp coupons—only the privacy of a

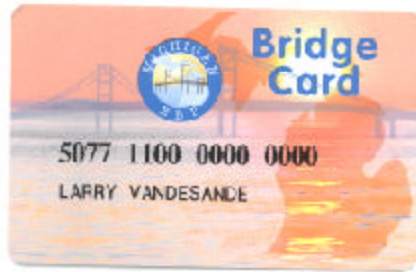
business transaction between a cardholder and retailer."

Each cardholder has separate electronic accounts for federal food stamps and cash assistance including Family Independence Program (FIP formerly AFDC) benefits.

According to the EBT rollout schedule, Wayne County recipients began using Bridge cards May 1. The remaining 36 counties will begin rolling out EBT on this schedule:

■ **June 1:** Iosco, Ogemaw, Roscommon, Missaukee, Wexford, Manistee, Benzie, Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Osceola, Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency, Otsego, Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, Cheboygan, Presque Isle and Mackinac counties.

■ **July 1:** Chippewa, Luce, Schoolcraft, Delta, Alger, Marquette, Dickinson, Menominee, Iron, Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, Ontonagon and Gogebic counties.



Replica card

New report on domestic violence homicides

More than 100 deaths in Michigan last year resulted from domestic violence

Report recommends uniform reporting, increased awareness and victim protection

Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus announced recommendations from the Michigan Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Task Force April 19. Posthumus chaired the task force, whose mission was to work toward eliminating homicides resulting from domestic violence.

"Domestic violence remains the sole responsibility of the abuser," Posthumus said. "Recommendations offer a guide to helping end homicides resulting from domestic violence but recognize that the ultimate responsibility still lies with the batterers and abusers. We must continue to hold them accountable."

For the past few months, Posthumus led a series of public hearings across the state to help examine domestic violence-related homicides. The 13-member task force heard testimony and received input from survivors of domestic violence, shelter coordinators, court and law enforcement officials, and family members of homicide victims.

The report includes findings and recommendations in four key areas: increase public awareness and education; increase victim protections throughout judicial proceedings; create uniform standards for reporting and tracking domestic violence crimes and offenders; enhance prevention training for judges and law enforcement.

"Many recommendations are long-term responses to helping eliminate domestic violence homicides and require the cooperation of several agencies," Posthumus said.

■ View the entire report at this website: www.migov.state.mi.us/lfgov/newsreleases

Workload management workshop stresses one-on-one assistance

Training program part of Zone 4 effort to improve food stamp accuracy efforts

By Rita Riddle, Acting Zone 4 AP Specialist

FIA Zone 4, Lansing

Telephone (517) 241-7568

OWOSSO—On Jan. 17, FIA Zone 4 hosted a one-day “Workload Management Consultant Workshop” to assist their counties in ways to improve work performance and increase food stamp accuracy. The training was held at the Comstock Inn in Owosso.

This training was presented by Sonya Groulx and Kay Boshaw, members of FIA Outstate Operations Technical Assistance Team (TAT), and assisted by team members Dianne Morales and Jamy Hengensbach.

Fifty-one persons attended including family independence managers & specialists and eligibility specialists from Zone 4 county offices, the Wayne County TAT and Wayne County Office of Personnel.

The workshop was targeted to assist staff who train new or experienced staff in setting up their work areas in the most productive fashion and assist them in setting their caseload priorities. The training offered information attendees could take to their local offices and share with their local management, then decide how best to utilize this information.

The Outstate TAT developed these techniques to assist FIS and ES. They have assisted staff in Oakland, Genesee and Washtenaw county offices. The one-on-one mentoring from an experienced person has been very useful. In this,



Participating in the workshop were (left to right): Deb Patterson, Sonya Groulx, Kay Boshaw, Diane Morales, Jamy Hengensbach, Deborah Taul and Juanita Billings.

the experienced FIS acts as a workload management consultant. The traits of the individual providing assistance are considered very important for success of the project.

Groulx began the training with a discussion of this, emphasizing the need for an atmosphere of trust to be quickly established between the consultant and the specialist to ensure the maximum amount of work to be accomplished in a short period of time. In this environment, the specialist's interactions are confidential and any specifics of the consultation are not shared.

In the consultation, the FIM shares specific local office procedures or best practices, specific workload management practices and information on the caseload. The specialist is given a survey to complete and, based on the information provided, the two will jointly identify problems and areas to be addressed. If appropriate, follow-up sessions may be scheduled and the specialist will be requested to complete a

voluntary evaluation at the end of the consultation.

Staffers who have used this assistance have responded positively. At the end of the Workload Management Training, trainees responded positively. A review of evaluations included this comment, “The

training would be most effective with newly hired employees with someone to help set up their caseload, follow-up with worker on what is working and what is not, with follow up at six months and a year.”

Other comments from the evaluations said, “The process map and the positive reinforcement portion was the most effective part of the consultation package.” Attendees made many recommendations about the training including using only outside consultants or zone-level specialty staff, and for consultants to have a recent connection with doing the job.

The training was the final installment a three-part initiative to improve food stamp accuracy efforts. The first, a training program called “Brainstorming for Food Stamp Accuracy Workshop”, was held last October. The second part was a site visit to the Berrien County Family Independence Agency in November 2000 to review that county's success in food stamp accuracy.

Wayne County Highland Park District honors 88th Achiever of the Month

Khristel DeLoach, mother of two and twice on assistance, honored March 30

By Gene Hashley, Communications Director
Wayne County Family Independence Agency, Detroit
Telephone (313) 256-1560

DETROIT—Three years ago Khristel DeLoach of Detroit was pregnant for her second child and unable to work because of medical complications.

Today, DeLoach has a good job in telephone sales at American Blind and Wallpaper and is working toward her goal of obtaining a management position.

DeLoach's difficult three-year journey, during which she overcame several barriers, earned her the honor of being the Family Independence Agency's 88th statewide Achiever of the Month during a recognition ceremony March 30 at the Arab-American and Chaldean Council in Detroit. DeLoach was nominated by the Highland Park district of the Wayne County Family Independence Agency.

About the program

The statewide Achiever of the Month award was established in October 1993 to recognize the contributions and achievements of those who participate in Michigan's landmark reform initiative, *To Strengthen Michigan Families*. Achievers are singled out for recognition because of their extraordinary efforts to achieve independence from



Khristel DeLoach

public assistance for themselves and their families.

At the March 30 event, FIA director Douglas E. Howard, Wayne County FIA deputy director Clarence Willis, Jr. and Highland Park district manager Kay McCaughna joined with Wayne County FIA co-workers and Work First staff to celebrate her achievements. Khristel's mother, Barbara DeLoach, and her boyfriend, Tarris Young, were among friends and family at the celebration.

Khristel's family independence specialist from Wayne County,

Lynda Craig, introduced her at the ceremony.

"Khristel DeLoach has demonstrated that she has the fortitude within herself to persevere and do whatever is necessary to become independent and work her way toward economic self-sufficiency," said Howard.

Fear on the less traveled road

Khristel, the mother of two children—Brandi, 8, and Tia, 1—first came to FIA for help in November 1992.

"I was scared and afraid to come to the FIA for assistance but I didn't know where my next meal was coming from and I knew I had to provide for my daughter," she said.

For the next several years she was on and off of assistance and working at a variety of temporary agencies to provide for her family.

In March 1998 she applied again for assistance because at that time she was pregnant and unable to work because of medical complications. She received Family Independence Program benefits, food stamps and Medicaid, three critical support programs that are essential to helping families when their own resources have been temporarily drained. Her



To Strengthen Michigan Families
Achiever of the Month

gas was also shut off and FIA helped her with funds to restore this essential service.

Another support service from the FIA brought income to her household. The FIA child support staff helped her locate her oldest daughter's father and she began receiving child support.

A turn toward hope and prosperity

In October 1999, when the FIA referred Khristel to Work First, she was extremely receptive to the program and wanted to learn everything she could to improve her employment opportunities.

Diversified Educational Services, the Work First contractor, helped Khristel prepare resumes and develop her interviewing skills. They also provided support services such as bus tickets, since she did not have a car.

Khristel quickly found part-time employment through Dunhill Staffing Services and as a result her cash assistance and food stamp cases closed due to her earnings in November 1999. She continues to receive day care and her children receive Medicaid.

While Khristel was glad to be working, she knew part-time employment would not provide her family with the financial security they needed and she was determined to do

whatever she could to improve their quality of life.

She began looking for another job and in March 2000, she was hired full-time in telephone sales at American Blind and Wallpaper.



The achiever with mother Barbara and friend Tarris Young. Khristel's father and stepmother also attended the ceremony, as did Tarris' parents.

She continues to work there today. In the future she would like to have a management position within the company.

Many thanks for much help

Although times were sometimes difficult, Khristel was grateful for the assistance she received from the FIA and Diversified Educational Services.

"The FIA helped me when I was down and could not work and Diversified is why I got this wonderful job," she said.

In addition, Khristel says her family and friends are very supportive. Her mother, Barbara DeLoach

has always been there whenever she was needed. Khristel credits her with providing emotional support, child care and helping with transportation by letting her use her car.

Her friend, Tarris Young, has also been helpful. He has provided emotional support and he has watched her children on weekends so Khristel could go to work.

Crystal-clear objectives

Khristel believes the love and support that she has received from her family and friends has been a constant that has encouraged her to succeed and do her best. However, it is her children who are

her true motivators.

"I put my mind to it and concentrated on getting a good job that would help me grow," Kristel said.

"I want to send my children to college and help them in every way I can. I am working toward getting a home for my kids so I can say this is our home. I also want to give back to the community and help others out.

"I want to let them know there is a God and we can all find success, if we put our minds to it! If you believe, you can make a difference!"



MSU program to help foster children attend college

Less than 10 percent attend college now; program aims to increase that statistic

EAST LANSING—Michigan State University announced a new scholarship program March 21 intended to help foster children who attend college. The Foster Care Youth Endowed Scholarship Program will provide a limited number of tuition-and-living-expense scholarships to incoming MSU freshmen who have spent some part of their childhood or adolescence in a court-ordered foster care placement in Michigan.

The program is the brainchild of MSU staffers Rob Henry and Susan Emfinger. Henry lived with a foster care family in Tennessee following the death of his mother when he was 4 years of age. His outstanding skills in speech and debate while in high school led to a full scholarship at Murray State University, where he studied communication. He later earned a master's degree in community and public relations from Eastern Michigan University.

"It's important to give options to foster children, and this was one way I could give back to the system that did so much for me as a child," he said. "If you can imagine being moved two or three times in your lifetime, you can imagine the low self esteem foster children grow up with. Somewhere, someone has to take an interest in these children and help them rebuild their sense of self-worth. This scholarship and mentoring program has the potential."

Henry, a licensed foster parent, notes MSU's outreach mission and commitment to making people matter fit with his desire to help foster children.

Emfinger lived with a foster care family as a teen and credits her foster mother with encouraging her to attend Michigan State, where she studied French and was a member of the Honors College.

"Children need role models at crucial points in their lives, and I'm grateful that my foster parents were there to step into that role for me," she said.

■ **Individuals interested in contributing to the Foster Care Youth Endowed Scholarship Program can call the MSU School of Social Work at (517) 355-7515. Prospective students can call 355-0333 for more information.**

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